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SYRIAN RUINS.

REMARKS OF PROF. WM. H. THOMSON, M. D.

Professor Wm. H. Thomson, M. D., was next introduced. He explained a number of pictures thrown upon the screen, and commented upon them in an instructive and interesting manner. While a resident of Syria, he said, he had frequent occasion to know how the disappearance of the most celebrated cities of antiquity had been brought about. He had seen the workmen quarrying amid the ruins of the once flourishing port of Beyrout. While they were digging for stone, he had seen them one day uncover a private passage in an ancient wall, from whose shot-holes doubtless many of Alexander the Great's soldiers were killed. Within a few months that fine passageway had been entirely removed, and its great stones broken up. In a similar manner the mighty foundations of the temple of Hercules were removed in the following year.

The visitor to the ruins of Gerasa would learn that the remaining walls had been constructed largely of Phœnician stones brought from the ruins of the great city Athleet. In this way, even in ancient times, cities were constructed out of the remains of their predecessors all along the shores of the Mediterranean where the stone could be transported by sea. In the East Jordan country, however, owing to the rugged nature of the region, it had never been possible to carry on this process upon a large scale, and hence the ruins of that district remained almost intact from century to century, and resulted in leaving that region more replete with buildings erected in its flourishing periods than any other district of equal area in the world.

Referring to a picture of the cedars of Lebanon, Dr. Thomson said that these are almost as great a curiosity as Lebanon itself. From very early times Lebanon was despoiled of its cedar groves by surrounding nations, so that we now find by the Ninevite inscriptions that the Syrian monarchs transported cedars for their palaces on the Tigris. At present there are only ten cedar groves on Mount Lebanon besides that at Barak.

The Jordan river does not, Professor Thomson said, owe its perennial volume of water to the direct influx of the winter rains, but rather to the melting of the snows on Mount Hermon which feed the vast fountain at its base, so that the Jordan is fullest two months

after the rainy season has ceased. The French writer, Volney, by whom the accuracy of the statements in the Book of Joshua, that the Jordan overflows its banks in barley harvest, that is in April, was questioned, made a great mistake when he stated that the Jordan was filled by the rains of January and February, and rapidly diminished after they ceased. This objection proved that he had never visited the Jordan in April, for it is only after its great fountains are swollen by the melting of the mountain snows, and have overflowed largely into Lake Tiberias, that the river bed becomes most filled.